

# GARDEN TRENDS

# 2022

The past two years have seen gardens – our own private spaces and those open to the public – taking on a greater significance. As well as being places to escape the home office, or venues for relaxed and airy social gatherings, the role they're increasingly being asked to play is as key allies in the fight to boost biodiversity. Here, ten top designers and gardeners reveal the shifts they have seen in gardening recently and how they will be approaching projects and growing in the coming year

creatures that dwell alongside us in our growing spaces may thrive.

## Biodiversity drive

Plantsman Charlie Harpur

This year will be wilder than the last, and life on Earth will thank us for it. Whether we like to be reminded of it or not, biodiversity is declining faster than it has at any other time in human history. But gardeners and designers are becoming more and more aware of our role in the crisis. Monty Don, for example, tackled one of the most accessible practical considerations in early 2021 when his comments on mowing lawns (or not, as the case may be) ruffled a few feathers among sward lovers, but he raised some excellent points.

The findings of the University of Sheffield's Biodiversity in Urban Gardens (BUGS) project – started in 2002 – are more relevant than ever, especially for our predominantly urban population. Among plenty of other things, the project highlighted the fact that there was that there was a whopping 13 square miles of private domestic gardens in Sheffield. As it was selected as a model city for the UK, we can assume that a similarly large proportion of other cities are made up of such high-input lost opportunities.

What BUGS also told us was that a wider range of plants generally equals greater biodiversity, which is a creed I can see being adopted in even the smallest gardens, roof terraces or windowsills. You can see just such a wide range of plants at The Serge Hill Project for Gardening and Health started by Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith, in Hertfordshire, which we hope will be open to visitors this year.

## Wonderfully wild

Designer Jonathan Snow

I've noticed a move towards gardens and landscapes that are more 'undone' than ever

before. Words such as 'nature', 'wildlife', and 'biodiversity' have long cropped up in briefs, but clients have only recently started to really embrace this trend.

I'm currently working on a design for a lake, and the plan is to allow the grass surrounding it to grow back by relying more on the seedbank within the soil, rather than intervention by way of a specialist seed mix. On the same project, a number of large fields are going to be rewilded with the lightest of touches, allowing natural processes to re-establish themselves more slowly.

Another client surprised me recently (and pleasantly) by asking for a really full and unruly garden in London. She wants to be completely immersed in planting, and the challenge is to give her that feeling in an urban setting, and for it to look good for the majority of the year. I also forecast an increasing appreciation for, and a willingness to pay for, good maintenance.

## Wildlife support

Designer Juliet Sargeant

The most striking trend that I'm seeing – and am delighted to see – is an increasing interest in creating some space and support for wildlife in the garden.

It cuts across all the styles of garden that my clients want: formal, country, urban and naturalistic. Most people are keen to plant with a view to feeding birds and insects, while some go as far as to think about creating habitats. People with a large enough space are often happy to give some over to meadow, and some are willing to let wildflowers or 'weeds' grow in the lawn. I would say, however, that for most British gardeners, a pristine, stripy lawn is still king.

One of our most popular day courses has become 'How to Create your Own Wildlife Pond' and I'm looking forward to increasing numbers coming to our various 'eco' and sustainable gardening days.

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CHARLIE HARPUR

DESIGN



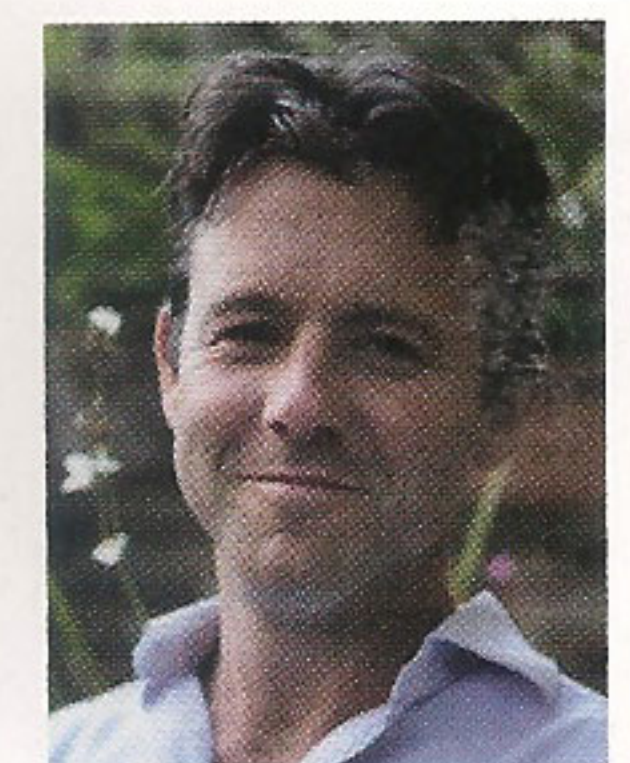
CLAIRE RATTON

Author and organic food grower, Claire is passionate about how plants and nature have the potential to heal and connect us.



CHARLIE HARPUR

Plantsman and designer for Tom Stuart-Smith Studio, Charlie is setting up The Serge Hill Project for Gardening and Health.



JONATHAN SNOW

A gold medal winner at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2021, Jonathan enjoys introducing contrasts to his designs to create depth and richness in the garden.



JULIET SARGEANT

Juliet is a keen advocate for health and wellbeing through gardening. She's a garden designer, presenter, and lead tutor at Sussex Garden School.